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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4402

February 15, 2005

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The Honorable Michael Johanns
Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, the President declared Washington County, Utah, a federal disaster area on February 1, 2005, following the recent hundred-year flood. On behalf of the people of Utah, I would like to express gratitude for the heroic efforts of the Utah staff of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) toward the relief effort and especially for the very quick allocation of \$6 million to restore the stream bed before the spring runoff brings more flooding.

On January 10, unusual precipitation combined with a sudden snow melt from unseasonably warm weather created a hundred-year flood in the Santa Clara and Virgin rivers which run through highly populated neighborhoods in Washington County. More than 40 homes have been ruined or completely swept away, bridges have been destroyed, and important infrastructures for electricity, natural gas, water, and phones have been permanently disabled. Federal assistance will be absolutely necessary to restore basic needs to this very populated area of Utah.

Our most immediate concern is the remaining snow pack which very soon will be melting and rushing through these communities where the streambed no longer exists. I understand the NRCS has determined that \$68.4 million is needed in addition to the initial \$6 million the NRCS has already provided to restore the stream banks and river bed to make these neighborhoods safe. However, while the NRCS has officially recognized the need for the additional emergency funds, such funds are not available.

Our Utah communities are in dire need and deserve federal assistance immediately to protect their families from further danger. As you know, the Administration has recently requested a supplemental appropriation for the tsunami victims and for our military operations in the Middle East. I support this supplemental. However, it makes no sense to ignore our own citizens who have recently faced a disaster and face the real potential of another. I urge you to work to secure Administration support for including relief to Southern Utah in

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the supplemental appropriations bill.

Again, I thank you for the tremendous assistance of the NRCS in our time of need, and I hope you can support my efforts to secure the full level of assistance needed, as catalogued by the NRCS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Orrin Hatch", is written over the printed name.

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator

OGH:jjb